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SUBJECT: U.S.-CHINA ECONOMIC AND SECURITY REVIEW
COMMISSION ROUNDTABLE WITH ACADEMY OF MILITARY SCIENCE
SCHOLARS

Summary

11. (SBU) Scholars from the People's Liberation Army-affiliated Academy of Military Science expressed the view to a United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission delegation that while United States' global strike capabilities may raise the threshold for the United States resorting to a nuclear attack, the capability is destabilizing because it may cause countries to act irrationally in the event of an attack. The academics stated that they do not view the global strike capability as a credible force against an advanced military. The United States and China have numerous channels for communication and now need to focus on improving mutual confidence. China is not adjusting its military modernization program or force structure in response to lessons learned from the Iraq war. Many in China view the annual reports to Congress on Chinese military power as a vestige of the Cold War that damages bilateral relations. China is not actively engaged in training African militaries or increasing its military sales to African countries, the scholars maintained. China will not take active offensive measures unless China is attacked. Chinese academics are undecided on whether a cyber-attack constitutes an act of war that can be responded to with military action. China's 2006 Defense White Paper expanded the PLA's mission to include protecting China's development interests around the world. The PLA is developing its capabilities to project power to protect China's interest regionally and globally, the scholars said. End Summary.

Global Strike

12. (SBU) A United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission (USCC) delegation led by USCC Chair Carolyn Bartholomew held a roundtable with academics from the PLA-affiliated Academy of Military Science in Beijing on April 23. Participants are listed in para 113. In response to Commissioner Wortzel's query on global strike, Senior Colonel Nie Songlai stated that the United States' global strike concept, the ability to strike early and quickly anywhere in the world without violating a third country's air space, does not contribute to strategic stability. In a theoretical war with China, global strike might provide the United States command authority with new options. The United States could hit key command and control targets and other facilities but it would not

be able to predict China's response. When threatened by a "global strike," China would not have much time to respond and thus might act irrationally. At a strategic level, employing a global strike capability would be a destabilizing factor. Global strike provides more options at a tactical and operational level, making it less likely that the United States would resort to a nuclear attack. Global strike is not, however, a credible force to be used against an advanced force such as the PLA. Global strike may be useful against individual targets but not against the capabilities of an advanced power. China's nuclear forces are secure and survivable, Nie stated.

Opportunity for New Channels of Communication?

13. (SBU) The United States and China already have numerous channels of communication at the political, economic and military levels, Nie stated in response to Commissioner D'Amato's concerns about the need to improve confidence building measures to prevent accidental military events from escalating. He agreed that the countries now need to enhance confidence measures. For the two militaries, this can be done through joint exercises and better communication between strategic-level leaders. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Pace noted during his visit that he does not view China as a threat. Nie said China is not a threat and it is not China's intent to be a threat. China does not regard the United States as a threat and defines the relationship as a constructive partnership. Likewise the United States defines China as a responsible stakeholder.

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The two countries are learning more about each other's intent, Nie stated.

Lessons Learned From Iraq War

14. (SBU) In response to Vice Chair Blumenthal's query on whether China is adjusting its modernization program after studying events in Iraq and in response to the United States decision to increase its ground forces, Major Liu Lin said the United States military has realized as a result of the current conflict in Iraq that it can not win a war with only air and naval power. The United States needs to increase its ground forces, but from the Chinese military perspective this is just an adjustment in the United States' strategy. The trend in the revolution in military affairs is still toward informationalization and air, naval and missile systems are very important. China will continue to follow this trend. The most challenging task for China is Taiwan, which is a different type of security challenges than the ones the United States is facing. So while the United States may adjust its force structure to increase its number of troops, China will continue to focus on developing its air and naval capabilities, Liu stated.

15. (SBU) China's military forces and those of the United States are at different levels of modernization, stated Senior Colonel Ren Xiangqun. China is focused on its air force and navy because the army is the strongest branch of the Chinese services. The PLA takes a balanced view of developing its capabilities as presented in the 2006 Defense White Paper, Senior Colonel Nie stated. Each service makes a unique contribution to the resolution of a war, and thus China's military develops all service branches in an "all-around way." The army is working on improving its mobility. The air force is working on improving its offensive strike capability. The navy is working

on transitioning to a blue water navy. The Second Artillery Corps is working to improve its ability to combine nuclear and conventional forces.

16. (SBU) Even though the United States is the world's sole superpower, there are some conflicts that the United States military power cannot solve, stated Senior Colonel Zhao Xiaozhuo. For example, there are so many potential adversaries in the "War on Terror" including Al-Qaeda and militias in Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran, that the war on terror must be solved through political and economic means. Zhao stated that the United States can win a conflict militarily but cannot win the war through military rather than political and economic means.

Misunderstandings Due to Lack of Trust

17. (SBU) In response to Commissioner Fielder's question about improving transparency, Nie responded that misunderstandings between the United States and China are not due to a lack of communication and transparency but rather due to a lack of trust. Nie emphatically stated that misunderstandings result from the United States' refusal to believe what China says. The two countries need to provide clearer and detailed information about their intent. China's grand strategy is peaceful development. It adopts a defensive military strategy. Its military budget is in line with its modernization strategy. The United States insists that China is not fully disclosing its military budget but the United States also has "undeclared military budgets, and countries have different accounting methods, Nie stated.

China Views Reports as Vestige of "Cold War Thinking"

18. (SBU) The United States' annual reports on Chinese military power do not play a constructive role in the bilateral relationship, stated Senior Colonel Zhao Xiaozhu. Many in China wonder why the United States publishes such a report and say that the report reminds them of the Cold War. The United States has only published military reports on China and Russia.

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Vice Chair Blumenthal responded that the reports are Congressionally mandated and required by law. The United States Congress is representative of the people and the people are concerned about a growing military whose intentions are not clear. The United States has published papers on China and Russia because, unlike other countries, the intent of the military modernization program of China and Russia is unclear. Senior Colonel Nie Songlai suggested that the true purpose of the report is to justify United States' arms sales to Taiwan. Chair Bartholomew responded that China's ASAT test and the Chinese submarine surfacing near the USS Kitty Hawk surprised many people in the United States and left them wondering about China's intentions. The United States must plan for worst case scenarios, she noted.

China's Military Activities in Africa

19. (SBU) In response to Chairperson Bartholomew's inquiry, Senior Colonel Zhu Yuxing stated that China has sent soldiers to serve as UN peacekeepers and there are African military cadets studying in Chinese defense universities. Zhu denied that China is training African troops or increasing its arm sales to Africa. Senior Colonel Nie Songlai quipped that China is not planning on establishing an "Africa Command."

China's Active Defense Does Not Equate to Preemptive Action

¶10. (SBU) China's active defense military doctrine consists of two parts: first to maintain a defensive posture on the strategic level and second, on the operational and tactical level to be prepared to take offensive action, stated Major Liu in response to Commissioner Wortzel's inquiry. China must first be attacked before it will make "offensive strikes," stated Liu.

Does Cyber-Attack Constitute an Act of War?

¶11. (SBU) There are many opinions in China about whether a cyber-attack constitutes an act of war, stated Major Liu. Some argue that a cyber-attack on a computer network is an act of war while others claim that a cyber-attack must be accompanied by a material attack to be defined as an act of war. Commissioner Wortzel raised the question of Chinese views on whether a country that perceives it has suffered a cyber-attack can respond with a material attack. Liu responded that if the cyber-attack occurs on a military computer system then perhaps a country can respond with a physical attack. Senior Colonel Zhao Xiaozhu added that if the attack is launched by a military than a country can respond with military action, but cautioned that these days anyone can launch a cyber-attack.

Securing Energy Supplies

¶12. (SBU) Securing energy supplies is a nontraditional security challenge faced by many countries, stated Senior Colonel Nie Songlai in response to Vice Chair Blumenthal's question on what type of investments China is making to secure its energy supplies. China is trying to adopt an energy strategy with a comprehensive approach. China is not just trying to secure lines of energy supply but also to improve its energy efficiency, expand its domestic production, diversify its sources of energy and build a strategic reserve. At the moment China's navy does not have enough capability to deal with securing energy supply lines on a global or regional basis. China's 2006 Defense White Paper included a statement on the PLA's missions, one of which is to defend China's right to development and its developmental interests in the region and the world. China is modernizing the PLA to defend China's interests. This is a new requirement for the military and now the military must increase its ability to project its capabilities.

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¶13. (SBU) Participants:

United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission:

Carolyn Bartholomew, Chairperson
Daniel Blumenthal, Vice Chair
¶C. Richard D'Amato, Commissioner
Jeffery Fielder, Commissioner
Larry M. Wortzel, Commissioner
Marta McLellan, Analyst

China's Academy of Military Science:

Nie Songlai, Senior Colonel
Bao Bin, Senior Colonel

Zhao Xiaozhu, Senior Colonel, Department of World
Military Studies
Zhu Yuxing, Senior Colonel, Vice Director of the
Foreign Affairs Office
Ren Xiangqun, Senior Colonel, Department of Strategic
Studies, East Asia
Liu Lin, Major, Department of World Military Studies

¶14. (SBU) The USCC delegation has cleared this
message.
RANDT